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368 OBSERVATIONS

ON A

WORK BY MR. BICKERSTETH,

ENTITLED,

“REMARKS ON THE PROGRESS OF POPERY,”

AND AN

A N S W E R

TO

HIS ATTACK ON THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

BY THE REV.

WILLIAM BRUDENELL BARTER, M.A.

RECTOR OF HIGHCLERE AND BURGCLERE,
AND GATE FELLOW OF ORIEL COLLEGE, OXFORD.

LONDON:

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AND WATERLOO PLACE, PALL MALL.

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OBSERVATIONS,

&c.

I HEARD that Mr. Bickersteth had written a short pamphlet, in which a most useful refutation of Roman Catholic error was to be found; that his book was a perfect Protestant's Vade Mecum in these times of rebuke, and that it also contained a very candid and useful exposure of some doctrinal errors, which he had detected in some of the Tracts published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. I was told also that a large number of the members of that Society who thought with him on this subject, had determined to make a stand on the ground which he had chosen, and to demand the correction of detected error, or rather the erasure of such tracts from the lists of the Society.

On opening the book I read the following sentences :—

“The glorious Gospel of the blessed God, committed to the trust of his ministers, (1 Tim. i. 11.) is the richest treasure which they can dispense to men. In proportion to the excellency of the treasure is the responsibility of faithfulness to their trust.

“How rich that treasure is, what tongue can utter! It is *the good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all*

people, that there has been born for us, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. It is *the faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*, even the very chief. It is the good news, that, though our God is beyond compare pure and holy, just and righteous, he *so loved the world*, the sinful, rebellious world, *that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

“By simple faith in God’s testimony concerning his Son, we enter into the most delightful of all feelings, that God loves us, though vile and sinful, and is our most tender and merciful Father, and thus we have the rich privilege of being his children. This faith is its own evidence in the peace, joy, love, and gratitude with which it fills the bosom of the Christian, and the holiness which it produces in his life. *He that believeth hath the witness in himself.* In his very coming to Christ he knows that he is among the elect, and has been drawn of the Father to come; *all that the Father giveth me shall come unto me: no man can come to me, except the Father draw him: my sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me.* Under the blessed influence of these truths, and by the new creating power of the Holy Ghost, the Christian loves as his tender Father the great God, loves his Saviour Jesus, and all his fellow-men; and in the diligent use of all God’s appointed means of grace, he is daily conformed, more and more, to his heavenly Lord, and becomes meet for his everlasting inheritance.”

Now had I met with this passage in a sermon, as I could not expect to find in every paragraph the

whole Gospel of our Lord and Saviour, nor perhaps a statement of all its principal truths in one discourse, though I must have considered it rather as a honied than a sound form of words; though I should have thought our entering at once on the most delightful of all feelings—a description rather of those who “receive the Word with joy,” than of those “who, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruits with patience”—yet the warmth of religious feeling expressed by the author might have left a pleasing impression.

But when this statement occurs at the beginning of a work which promises to set forth a confutation of the mischievous errors of Popery, and also of those other errors, less glaring indeed, but equally destructive to the vitality of true religion, which we are told have crept into tracts circulated by the Christian Knowledge Society, a clear and exact understanding of the author’s meaning in this passage is absolutely necessary to any useful perusal of his work.

Now in these sentences the author professes to inform his readers not only what the religion of Christ really is, but in what way we are bound to receive it; in what consists the evidence of our having received it aright, and what effects will be produced by its real reception in the heart. We must therefore regard this passage as of the utmost importance. We must inquire not only whether what is said, is said truly, but whether the whole truth is indeed scripturally set forth. Now if we find that either of these conditions, but especially the last, on which alone we ought to yield our confidence to any writer, has not been fulfilled, we shall not surely

transgress the limits of Christian charity, if we doubt the competence of the author to instruct others on a subject concerning which his own information is deficient, and his own opinions are erroneous.

For the purpose of ascertaining in what manner the Gospel should be preached, I have recourse to the last instructions which our blessed Redeemer gave his chosen disciples on that subject. In St. Matthew I find that he thus instructed them: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." In St. Mark I find these instructions: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." In St. Luke his will is thus recorded: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise again the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Faithful to his trust, St. Peter, when the disciples were first asked by convicted sinners,—“Men and brethren, what shall we do?” answered, as their spokesman, “Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost.”

It is not my intention at present to insist that the order of things is reversed in Mr. Bickersteth's statement of Christian doctrine, or to charge the

author with having asserted anything that is not scriptural, in the passage we are considering; but this I mean to say, that he has not stated the whole truth, but has suppressed a part; that he has omitted entirely—repentance and baptism: the one a gift indissolubly connected with true faith, and which our Saviour is now at the right hand of God, to give to those who ask it,—the other an institution sanctioned as a means of grace by his example and command.

It is not enough to say that these things are implied or presupposed. When we open to the view of the sinner the glorious structure of God's salvation, not only must he see it raised on Jesus Christ as the corner-stone, but the sacred building must be complete in all its members; to each must be given the prominence assigned to it, in the Word of God; and none must be disposed according to man's wisdom or man's prejudice, but according to the order in which he has placed them; to whom, in number, weight, and measure, all his works are known, from the foundation of the world.

What could a Roman Catholic priest, contending for the advancement of his Church, desire more than a mutilated statement of Christian doctrine from the pen of a violent opponent? He has only to point out its manifest imperfections to any proselyte whom he has compassed sea and land to gain, and to say, "this is the Protestant's profession—*ab uno disce omnes*,—from this instance you may see how imperfect and unscriptural is the faith professed by the ministers of the Church of England."

Mr. Bickersteth may be sure that the time for beating down the Church of Rome by opprobri-

ous appellations is passed by. In times of ignorance and popular excitement, they answered their intended purpose; but the abuse of such weapons (which were certainly wielded with success in the times of the reformers, and which he confounds with the doctrines then held by the Church of England¹) has much injured our cause by its reaction. These means of attack are not used exclusively in the cause of truth,—on the contrary, they are the presumptive proofs of error: this the world has seen, and their efficacy will never be restored unless the world should be again blinded by the same party zeal in religious matters, to which, indeed, their mischievous power originally owed its existence.

The method of combating the errors of the Church of Rome, which he deplores, and to the use of which he attributes its increasing influence, is, in fact, the only method which we should adopt, as Christians from a sense of duty, and as wise men from a sense of expediency; viz. “the detection and exposure of divers of her erroneous principles and detestable practices.” I am not without hope that such a course may be attended by the blessing of God, and become the source of extensive consequent good; and the brightest gleam of hope which I derive from the universal spread of

¹ It is scarcely possible to select a term more equivocal than “Reformation Principles.” Reformation principles may signify the principles of our Reformed Church, or, according to Godwin in his History of the Commonwealth, the principles of those (I quote the words of the author), “Who never dreamt of sanctioning such an establishment as the Church of England.” Those who speak evil of dignities and those who honour them, the meek and lowly, the heady and high-minded, may alike be said to act on Reformation Principles.

knowledge is this, that the superstitious creed which has undergone the attacks of violence, and risen from the earth as a refreshed giant, may find its strength unequal to a conflict with persevering, yet meek and humble, opponents, who know how to use the word of God with Christian temper, who doubt the justice of their course when they find that the bad passions of the human heart are easily enlisted in their favour, and who, armed with the sword of the Spirit, forget not to have their feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.

Mr. Bickersteth does not see the matter in this light. We are advised by him to attach to Popery the designation by which a mysterious power is characterized in the book of Revelations; this, we are told, was the habit of the Reformers, the good old custom to which we should return, and to the omission of which, together with the corruption of the faith in the tracts of the Christian Knowledge Society, the growth of Popery in England is to be attributed.

It is true that these means were used by the Reformers; it is true that, when party spirit raged most violently on both sides, reviling accusations were used as party watch words, and answered for a time the purpose to which they were applied. Men who knew nothing of the points of faith in dispute, could cry out, "burn him for an heretic," or, "leave not a rag of the scarlet one;" and words of Scripture were used to inflame and rouse the worst feelings of human nature, and to make men hate one another, although by far the greatest number on either side knew not the reason of their enmity, nor cared to know. Our English Poet has remarked this, with his usual

knowledge of human nature, when he makes by no means a sapient character exclaim—

“An I thought he was a Puritan, I would beat him as a dog.”

When asked the exquisite reason of his vehemence, he has none to give.

Thus the no-Popery mobs have had their watch-words, and the use of them has recoiled on their adversaries in times of cool reflection. This surely is not the way to win souls to Christ. This is not “instructing in meekness those that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.”

It is true that Mr. Bickersteth disclaims the intention of directing his maledictions against any Roman Catholic now breathing, or even against the present head of the Roman Catholic Church. It is only, however, while they will permit their Church to be designated by the name of Babylon that is to be destroyed by fire, that he allows them the benefit of his forbearance; if they dare to put on the prophecy any other interpretation but his own, the author immediately attaches to the pope, the cardinals, the priests, the jesuits, and the monks now dwelling in Rome, the epithets of “hateful and unclean birds,” from which I shall not defend them, but content myself with admiring the ingenuity to which the above-mentioned dignitaries are indebted for the choice of such an alternative.

Being desirous also of affixing to Popery the title of Antichrist, our author draws a comparison between Popery and Infidelity, to the advantage of the latter.

On this point it is possible that much may be said on both sides, and all to no good purpose; nor is it easy to institute a less profitable or a more odious comparison. It is prosecuted, however, in this instance with so much warmth, that Mr. Bickersteth is at last induced to confer on his adversary the benefit of a false accusation. He accuses Romanism of being Antichrist, *because* it denies the Father and the Son. Now, surely this is properly a charge against the Infidel, not against the Roman Catholic. The Infidel, when questioned with regard to the Father or the Son, says, "I know Him not;" and if further pressed, will blaspheme his name, and again deny Him: whilst the Roman Catholic professes to hold in the highest reverence the doctrine of the Trinity. To say, then, that Popery is Antichrist, instead of Infidelity, because it denies the Father and the Son, is a false charge.

To accuse Popery of being Antichrist, as Mr. Bickersteth proceeds to do, because "not to confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is to be deceiver and Antichrist," (although the confession thus untruly excluded from the Roman Catholic faith is notoriously as much a fundamental doctrine of that religion as of our own,) is to advance a charge which might almost countenance a suspicion that we are reading the words of a concealed friend to the Papal power, who makes a manifestly absurd attack, in order that its ready confutation may benefit the delinquent.

In this case, however, is it not rather a striking and lamentable instance of the manner in which the sacred study of prophecy may be perverted, when it is used in aid of a preconceived system of doctrine? What error may not derive apparent support from

these mysterious portions of Holy Writ, if we venture to interpret their symbolical language literally on the one hand, and to use a figurative interpretation with regard to their plain statements on the other ?

There is a method, indeed, of proving Romanism to be Antichrist, which the love of truth suggests; and which Mr. Bickersteth does not omit. He exposes well the error of the Roman Catholics, who attribute merit to our works, and contrasts their doctrine with that of Scripture. On this point, the extracts which he makes from the decrees of the Council of Trent, are well adapted to show the errors of Popery to the unlearned; and were I obliged to hold up one error of Popery, and one only, to public detestation, it should be that part of the system which is engrafted on the false doctrine of human merit, the works of supererogation, and the sale of indulgences, from the stock of good works which the Pope has in hand, and of which he is the dispenser. We are imperatively commanded by the love of truth to call such a system as this "a mystery of iniquity." The same love of truth commands us to abstain from calling Popery Antichrist, because it denies that the Son of God is come in the flesh.

It is strange that the author can say such things of Popery, when he is comparing it to Infidelity, with the desire of proving it to be the worst of the two, yet can adopt exactly the opposite method of dealing with the subject, and see the matter precisely in the view in which I have placed it, when he is comparing it to formal Protestantism, or rather to a Protestant Church in England, as described by a Roman Catholic lady. He then says that Popery "holds the truth, though it be leavened;" whereas,

before he accused it of denying the very truth on which all religion is founded—that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh.

Such a manifest inconsistency first led me to suspect that the author has deceived himself with regard to his great hatred of Popery, or at least that his warmest feelings of indignation are excited against those members of his own Church, who are not of his own opinion; and on further consideration of his arguments, I have found still stronger reasons for thinking that this is the real state of the case.

It is to the decay of Protestant principles in England that the author attributes the increase of Popery, and the decay of Protestant principles he attributes mainly to the corrupted doctrines disseminated in the tracts of the Christian Knowledge Society. It is instructive to watch his proceedings in order to cover this attack, an attack which we shall see abundant reason to conclude is in reality made against a large majority of the members of the Church of England.

If this country had been the only state in which Popery had increased, the ground would have been perfectly open before him. If there had been in America an Established Church, the counterpart of that in England, supported by the State, and disseminating its doctrines by means of a Christian Knowledge Society, accusations brought against our Church would have derived strength from the fact that a similarity of circumstances in America had produced the same effects.

But the Episcopal Church in America has been obliged by its poverty to beseech the gift of 2,000*l.* from its sister in England, and has no Christian

Knowledge Society to propagate its errors, yet in that country (the colony of Puritanism) a far greater increase of Popery has taken place in proportion to its population than in England.

These facts effectually obstruct the progress of any one who wishes to attribute the increase of Popery to the tracts of the Christian Knowledge Society. Let us observe how Mr. Bickersteth deals with them. In North America, he says, "though accounts differ, and probably the chief increase of Papists has been from emigrants of their communion, from other countries, it is probable that Papists have also been, to a certain extent, successful in turning Protestants to their awful delusions." Yet in a note underneath he gives us an account of a Roman Catholic population of 600,000 souls, an Archbishop, 12 Bishops, 341 Priests, 401 Churches, Mass Houses 300, other religious establishments 109. With these facts before him, I think Mr. Bickersteth might have used rather a stronger term than the probable increase of Popery in the United States. In proportion to the population it is far greater than in England, which, at the time of the French Revolution, received from the Continent all the ablest and most influential Roman Catholics into its bosom. With this information before him, what would have been the course pursued by a man of candid and unprejudiced mind? Would he not have concluded that the same effects were produced by the same principles at work in both countries? Would not this conclusion have naturally directed his inquiries towards such causes connected with the increase of Popery as are common to both, however modified their form and operation

may be by dissimilar states of civilization, or by differences in point of wealth, laws, and climate. Mr. Bickersteth has not adopted such a course. In his opinion, the only fault for which both countries may equally be censured appears to be the not degrading Popery by the name of Babylon the Great; the not casting in her teeth the appellation of the Scarlet one. Now I must think that he might easily have discovered a far more powerful reason for the increase of Popery, viz. *disunion among Protestants*; this, I am sorry to say, is common to both countries, and rapidly increasing.

The self-evident truth of this fact has escaped Mr. Bickersteth's notice. The growth of Popery he traces to no common cause, but in England attributes it to the falling away from Protestant Principles; and the falling away from Protestant Principles to the tracts circulated by the Christian Knowledge Society. These I would only defend from a false accusation; but that they have ever converted a single soul to Popery, or prepared one for such conversion, I utterly deny.

For the sake of argument, I will adopt the opinions of their adversaries, and say that those who advocate the system of instruction employed in the tracts alluded to, are formal but attached members of the Church of England. Now where shall we find an instance of the conversion of such a character to Popery? It has always been known with regard to the few converts which have been made from our communion, that they have been in our Church, but not of it; for some time before they have left it, they have either given undue prominence to some

doctrine contrary to the spirit of our Church, or maintained a creed of their own unknown to it, and unacknowledged by it; and, among the various blasts of doctrine which have bewildered their imaginations, the converts to Popery have most generally been known to have held, at one time or other, the highest Calvinistic opinions; with the dissemination of which I do not think Mr. Bickersteth will charge the Christian Knowledge Society. These, however, are rare instances, the greatest number who go astray, (to the shame of Christian parents be it spoken,) have fallen into the hands of designing men, before that (spiritually speaking) "they could discern their right hand from their left hand."

With regard to the general assertion, that the Roman Catholic religion has increased in consequence of the decline of Reformation Principles in England, Mr. Bickersteth ought surely to be able to mention some era when the Romanists were proportionably fewer, in consequence of the maintenance of these principles in their primitive purity. It is difficult to imagine on what period in our history he would be inclined to fix, except that lamentable time during which his doctrines, "and something more," were propagated by men of fierce souls, armed with irresponsible authority, by men who enforced submission to their perverted system of divinity, by carrying the Bible in one hand, but the sword in the other.

Mr. Bickersteth himself also dates the rapid increase of Popery from the last thirty or forty years, a period of time during which, I think, that no one would maintain that the influence of Reformation

Principles, according to his notion of them, has diminished in this country.

Sects and divisions among Christians have indeed manifestly increased, during this period, and facilitated greatly the progress of the Roman superstition. Our own Church has felt deeply the effect of this spirit (1); the Church of England, the only obstacle which the Romanist has really at heart to remove, has been weakened by those of her sons who have formed parties within her pale, and joined parties without her precincts; and it is a subject of deep lament to those who love her in sincerity, that though her exertions have been great, she has not obtained the mighty religious influence which she might have exercised over the uttermost parts of the earth, by means of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign parts, and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, had all her sons supported her with a true and undivided allegiance.

I proceed now, from the consideration of these general statements, to those passages selected from tracts circulated by the Christian Knowledge Society, in which the truth, as it is in Christ Jesus, is said to be perverted. The first instance is chosen from Mr. Crossman's Catechism. In that catechism the first selected question and answer stand thus :

Q. Upon what conditions are you to expect a life of eternal happiness after death?

A. If I do those things which my godfathers and godmothers promised for me at my baptism.

Here, says Mr. Bickersteth, everlasting happiness is made to depend on the righteousness of the sinner, and not on the righteousness of Christ; it is no longer

the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus. Now Mr. Bickersteth must know that the things promised are repentance and faith, and that the faith must be a justifying faith, for a continuance in the works of faith is promised to the life's end. Now I do not believe that there is a being who names the name of Christ, who will deny that the man who doeth these things will inherit eternal life. The Arminian, the Supralapsarian in our Church, the Baptist, the Quaker, the Wesleyan, the Independent, men of every shade and variety of opinion on other points, I believe concur in the conclusion, that the man who repents, believes, and perseveres in bringing forth the fruits of faith, will inherit eternal life. Yet such a statement Mr. Bickersteth calls making everlasting happiness depend on the righteousness of the sinner, and not the righteousness of Christ, it is no longer the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus.

He might with equal justice, and he must, consistently, transfer his accusation to sundry texts in Holy Writ, to many assertions of our Lord and his Apostles. Our Saviour says, "they that believe, and are baptized, shall be saved:" here Mr. Bickersteth might say, with equal justice, Salvation is made to depend on the belief and baptism of the sinner, Jesus Christ is excluded; or, "Repent, ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out:" here remission of sins, the free gift of God, is made to depend on repentance and conversion, Jesus Christ is excluded. Is this true zeal in the cause of our blessed Lord and Saviour? I think not; it is either zeal without knowledge, or it is the zeal of disunion, the blinded heat of party spirit.

I do not mean to defend every expression in Mr. Crossman's Catechism, or in the tracts of the Christian Knowledge Society generally. I have seen many of which I wholly disapprove; for instance, I have seen the expression that we shall be rewarded according to our "merits;" now were this the case, who would escape? The believer will be rewarded according to his works, not according to his merits. There are in Mr. Crossman's Catechism, also, many confused statements. The next which Mr. Bickersteth quotes is one of them. Mr. Crossman says, the performance of the conditions to serve and obey God will procure for us eternal life, through Jesus Christ. Here there is an evident misstatement; there is no merit in the performance of the conditions; after all we can do we are unprofitable servants, the performance of any condition can no more obtain for us eternal life than our own natural strength can move the universe; eternal life is the free gift of God, purchased for us by the death of his Son, and *given* to those who believe in him and obey him. Obedience is necessary to our salvation, but it does nothing towards deserving it. I believe, however, that Mr. Crossman had no more an intention of representing our eternal salvation as any thing but the gift of God than Mr. Bickersteth himself. Let his confused statements be set right; but whatever alterations are made, let them be made in the spirit of peace and concord¹, let them be made

¹ The absence of this Spirit is *now* deeply felt at the monthly meetings of the Christian Knowledge Society. Such publications as this by Mr. Bickersteth are not calculated to promote its return.

scripturally, let not the slightest cause of triumph be given either to the Arminian or Calvinistic party in our Church, for by such an error the seeds of discord will be sown, and the extent of the evil results will be incalculable.

I think that Mr. Bickersteth's violence may do some good as a warning: having begun his attack on Mr. Crossman by a perfectly unfounded accusation, he follows it up by commenting on sundry other passages, sometimes with good reason, sometimes without, but always with equal violence, until, to sum up all, he accuses him of "adulterating both the Law and the Gospel, destroying the power of both in the soul, bringing in self-righteousness, darkening the grace of Christ, beclouding his salvation, and leaving an awakened conscience in bondage." Well might Mr. Bickersteth's words be turned against himself, "the wrong and injury done to God's truth, and to men's souls by such anti-christian statements are unutterable." It might be added, that it is by such violent assertions as these that the zeal of partisans is kindled into a flame, party spirit obtains its watchwords, the unity of the Church is broken, and she is weakened by divisions when she needs all her strength to oppose the enemy.

I must here make an observation on the system of exclamations used by Mr. Bickersteth, such as, "Oh, it grieves my heart to say this!" What end can such interjections answer? They may impress weak minds with a conviction of the author's sincerity. They are powerful means in popular declamation to excite sympathy, to stir the feelings, but

I trust Mr. Bickersteth's end is rather to convince the judgment. These things can never be substitutes for the truth, and truth despises such auxiliaries. Indeed, though I am far from denying an exception in this instance, they do not generally emanate from a firm conviction of the truth. "Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just," and, conscious of his strength, uses not a vain parade of words, "there are no tricks in plain and simple truth."

Such warm expressions are, however, powerful in exciting sympathy, and in making proselytes. When Peter, with the utmost warmth of expression, exclaimed, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee in any wise," we read that likewise, also, said all his disciples, but how was the promise kept? Contrast with this his answer, when he knew his Redeemer to be his God by the power of his resurrection, when he was questioned with regard to the love he bore Him, and that love was really the first, the abiding principle in his heart, "Yea, Lord," a plain, simple affirmation; and even when he was vexed that he was thrice questioned, he does not break out into impassioned protestations of what he felt, but ascribes to his God, the attribute of omniscience, and thus vindicates himself by giving glory to Him; "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." How this simple expression told the tale of his heart, was shown in the patience with which the holy martyr bore his sufferings, when others led him whither he would not.

But I return to Mr. Bickersteth's attack on Mr.

Crossman. He has been told by some friends, it seems, that all he has already said is not enough. It has been thought, he says, that the fundamental errors of the work, which has been widely circulated, should be more fully pointed out, and, therefore, he offers in this edition a few additional remarks.

In the first sentences he gives a very well drawn description of the Christian's happiness, following, in this instance, the example of the Roman Catholics, by mingling truth with error. He then proceeds to deny that Baptism is a covenant. Now I do not mean to enter on an interminable controversy connected with this subject ; my wish is to steer clear of all controversial subjects as far as may be, and only to remark on those assertions which I find to be evidently unfounded, and which must be allowed to be so by fair men of all opinions. I shall, therefore, say only, that this remark might better have been directed against the Church Catechism, and the Baptismal Service which the author uses every time he admits an infant into the Church of Christ. In that Service Baptism is clearly represented as a covenant. The minister there tells the sponsors that they have prayed for certain blessings which Christ has promised to grant, which promise He for his part will most surely keep, and perform ; wherefore, after this promise made by Christ, this infant must on its part promise by his sureties repentance, faith, and obedience. If this be not a covenant, what is it ? (2). Yet in this manner Mr. B. goes on making the strongest assertions, mixed with powerful statements of scriptural truth, totally forgetting that the same truths may be differently stated, with-

out violating the simplicity of the Gospel, and that other truths there are, besides those on which he dwells with such exclusive interest, equally necessary to salvation.

I shall mention one instance more of a most ungrounded accusation brought against Mr. Crossman, wherein he is charged with being the author of a plan by which we are saved by our works. The question asked is this, what qualifications are necessary on our parts in order to obtain the pardon of our sins in this holy sacrament? Mr. C.'s answer is this, a hearty faith in the merits of Christ's sufferings, repentance for sins that are past, and sincere resolutions of amendment of life. Does Mr. B. mean to deny that the faithful communicant obtains forgiveness of sins in this sacrament? Does he not believe that the prayer, "Forgive us all that is past," is granted to those who with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto their God? And what is required of them who come to the Lord's supper but "to repent them truly of their former sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a new life; to have a lively faith in God's mercy, through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death, and to be in charity with all men?" Such are the qualifications required in order that we may obtain forgiveness of sins in that sacrament. To deny that they are so, is to contradict the plain doctrines of our Catechism and Sacramental Services. *Indeed it is against these, and not against Mr. Crossman, that the accusation is in reality directed.*

The same doctrines of the Gospel are next assailed in the person of Bishop Wilson, the venerable and Evangelical prelate of Sodor and Man; who, if the

records of a pious life may authorize in any case human judges to pronounce such an eulogy, may be said to have devoted himself to his Saviour's cause from this motive only, the love of that Saviour in his heart : one, whose mild, practical, apostolical method of instruction, whose sound and moderate system of Christian doctrine, exhibit to those who have studied his character a fit representative of the English Church. The purity of this man's life, the piety of his religious exercises, the humility which christianized his intercourse with all men, have forced, even from fanatic malevolence, an unwilling homage to his memory. But these times of forbearance are passed, and if the doctrines of our services are to be attacked in the person of any one individual, there is propriety in the selection, for certainly I know of no one in whose writings they are more uniformly maintained than in those of the excellent Bishop Wilson.

It is needless to follow the author in his first charges against this holy man, they are precisely the same in kind with those I have already considered in the case of Mr. Crossman, relating to the necessity of good works, and the benefits derived from a faithful receiving of the Sacrament. The Bishop's opinions on these points are not met, in the first instance, on Scriptural grounds, but they are compared with the decrees of the Council of Trent, and with the London Vicar's Apostolic Sermon ; and are said to escape the anathemas denounced in the one, and to be written in the spirit of the other.

It is certainly a singular method of discrediting the opinions of a great authority to select short sentences from his works, and accuse them of false

doctrine, because, when placed in juxta position with certain decrees of the council of Trent, they happen to escape the anathemas therein denounced. There is, however, one strong objection to this proceeding. It establishes a canon of criticism, which evil-disposed persons may apply with equal force to the discredit of the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, or any other passage in Scripture.

The author then brings an extract from a sermon of his own, on Justification by Faith, in which he professes to have exposed not Bishop Wilson's errors, but the error of the Vicar Apostolic; and after comparing Bishop Wilson's doctrines with those of another Roman Catholic, Bishop Baines, he exhorts to prayer, that the servants of Christ in the Christian Knowledge Society, which term is used to designate those who prefer Mr. Bickersteth's doctrine to that of Bishop Wilson, may be strengthened, (which means may have the majority,) and be enabled to erase Bishop Wilson's tracts from the lists of the Society.

For my own part, I trust that such an event may never take place; but if it should seem fit, at any time, to those who may be in power, to affix such a stigma on the memory of such a man, I venture to think that it will not be done in a corner; that some member of that society will give due notice of the measure; and that all who do not wish to become parties to the transaction, will have an opportunity given them of protesting against it.

I am well aware that this point should not be decided by the character of the man (3), but by the purity of his doctrines. I shall now, therefore, take

the specimen selected from them by his antagonist, and rest my defence on the question, whether the doctrine contained in the sentence so chosen be true or false? "If with faith and humility we do the best we can to serve and please God, we may be sure that our services, however imperfect, will be accepted, and that, however undeserving, we shall not lose our reward." This doctrine is stigmatized by Mr. Bickersteth as Antinomianism and self-righteousness. Now let us examine calmly the doctrine which is thus stigmatized. The first requisite that is stated, in order to please God, is faith, a principle by which we are turned from the service of Satan to that of the living God. The believer is a servant, a faithful servant of God, trusts in Him for ability to do his will, and to the grace of his Holy Spirit to work in him to do it. A believer is united to Christ, through Him obtains pardon and acceptance, and from love to Him obeys Him. Such is the first requisite mentioned by the Bishop: would that the nature of faith had been drawn in this instance by his hand, he would have done far greater justice to the master principle of his heart!

But the heavenly-minded man who gave this advice, knew well the snare of spiritual pride which might render vain spiritual gifts; therefore, after the example of the Apostle, who said, "thou standest by faith, be not high-minded, but fear," he adds humility. It is with faith and humility that we are to exert to the utmost the power God has given us, for faith is the gift of God; and then we are sure that our services, however imperfect, will be accepted, and that, however undeserving, we shall not lose our

reward. That our services will be imperfect we know; that they will also be accepted we know, for God has told us that he will not forget our labour of love; that we shall not lose our recompence of reward we know, for the faithful are told to look for it.

Let Mr. Bickersteth disprove this statement of Christian doctrine, but let him not think that by bringing another true statement, couched in different terms, he can prove this to be false. He might as well reject St. Paul's doctrine of justification by faith only, by bringing forward St. James's doctrine of justification by works.

When will the members of our holy Church cease to differ on such points? When will they cease to take up strong opposite positions defended by texts of Scripture, and from positions thus chosen annoy and vex each other? When will they see that each may be in the right; that the one party may direct its attacks chiefly against self-righteousness, the other against Antinomianism and indolence, as they may see occasion, according to the example of the Apostles; and that each may say to the other, "the Lord prosper you, we wish you good luck in the name of the Lord."

But when a man whose venerable name¹, is almost identified, if there be any such, with the Church of

¹ This attack on Bishop Wilson, seemed to demand an answer from some individual who venerated his memory, and the conviction that an injury had been done, not only to a pious character, but to the cause which he served, decided the Author to publish these observations. It is one of the most melancholy signs of the present state of religion in this country, that such an attack can be received by many, as a Fruit of the Spirit of Truth.

England, as to doctrine and practice, is accused of Antinomianism and self-righteousness, when he is charged with *making faith a virtue, by which we are pardoned*, it is necessary that the falsehood of such accusations should be calmly pointed out, for their absurdity renders them not a whit the less mischievous if they be widely circulated and received as truths.

It may be also useful under such circumstances to contrast with the doctrines really held by the accused, those which we are recommended to substitute for them. Let us observe that the Bishop never says, "do what you can, and Christ will make up the deficiency." He knew well that we can do nothing of ourselves as of ourselves, for our sufficiency is of God. He knew also that such doctrine would have implied that our works obtained for us in part that which is wholly the gift of God. What he does say is this, that the humble believer who makes the best use of his talents will be rewarded according to his imperfect obedience, a doctrine altogether scriptural.

Let us compare with this Mr. Bickersteth's statement, that by simple faith we enter at once into the most delightful of all feelings. When St. Paul preached the doctrine of justification by faith only, he preached it in opposition to the idea that we could be justified by doing the works of the law. He never preached justification by faith without repentance, for they are inseparably connected. Nor did he ever preach justification by faith without the works of faith, (if we have power given us to perform them,) for then he would have preached a doctrine contrary to St. James, who insisted on justification by the works of faith. The truth is, (if

factionous disputants could but see it,) that *neither faith, nor love, nor obedience, justify in any other manner than so far as they unite us with Christ : it is He that justifieth*, it is by an union with Him that we are justified, and through Him that we obtain pardon and acceptance. We enter on this union by faith, but not certainly by simple faith as unconnected with repentance, which always either precedes or accompanies the first actings of faith on the heart. Without sorrow for sin no man can believe with a justifying faith on that Saviour who died to release him from the power and punishment of sin.

This union then, begun by repentance and faith, is carried on and cemented by patient continuance in well doing, by keeping the commandments of our God ; since to those who keep them Jesus Christ has promised to come, and with them to take up his abode. In order to keep his commandments the believer must use watchfulness, prayer, and the partaking of the body and blood of Christ, as means of grace, as means whereby he may continue in, and cement the union begun by repentance and faith. If he fall from this state of holiness his union with Christ is interrupted, and blessed only are they who at the moment of their death are one with Christ, that is, his faithful servants, doing his bidding from the abiding principle of love to their Master. Therefore He says to all, " Watch."

Mr. Bickersteth does not seem to be aware that the true doctrine of Justification by Faith, the only hope that the sinner has of being able to stand in the presence of an holy God, may be so preached as to have all the effects of falsehood. To describe the commencement of a life of faith as an entering at

once on the most delightful of all feelings, is to speak smooth things, to prophesy deceits. Such doctrine will never be received by the sober-minded ; it will puff up the confident, and drive to despair the weak and humble, whom it is the glory of the Gospel to exalt. It is also scripturally false. The most delightful of all feelings which the Christian can imagine were those which St. Paul experienced when he was about to affix the seal to his laborious ministry by his blood ; and they arose not only from knowing Him in whom he had so long believed, but from the consciousness that he had fought the good fight, that he had finished his course, that he had kept the faith. Mr. Bickersteth's doctrine reverses the order of things, and places the goal at the commencement of the course. Thus all the similitudes by which in Scripture the Christian's life is described, of a warfare, a race, a conflict, are rendered comparatively inapplicable and unmeaning, and feeling is established as the test of our faith—a test as variable as the weather. Thus, in the first stage of his Christian pilgrimage, the young novice, all unstained with the miry ways of the world's wilderness, passes at one light step to the gate of Jerusalem, and, without a trial, but with a happy confidence, seizes on the enjoyment of a saint's reward.

How indignantly would St. James have met any statement of Christian doctrine, in which undue prominence had been given to feeling as a test of faith !! But I shall not discuss further Mr. Bickersteth's exposition of his opinions : it is not my wish to prove him to be incorrect on any point which may be fairly deemed controversial. I know too well how useless and endless such discussions are ; my only object has

been to oppose his positive but groundless assertions, and against such, and such only, I trust my arguments have been directed.

Having considered the principal objections raised in this volume against the tracts of the Christian Knowledge Society, I must in justice declare, that, were I to include them in a generic term, it would be in that of "sound doctrine." An expression which I should thus interpret, sober expositions of scriptural truth. The tracts generally circulated by other religious societies I should class under the equally comprehensive appellation of "fables;" not meaning by such a term that any such writings are necessarily false, but comparatively works of the imagination, the main object of them being to interest the feelings.

The last charge which is made against the Christian Knowledge Society is the non-publication of Fox's Book of Martyrs. I have the deepest respect for that venerable Martyrologist; but I should be sorry to hear that the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge had made itself responsible for the historical accuracy of all his statements; and I trust that it will never republish any historical work without considering that it incurs that responsibility in its fullest sense.

The self-styled Religious Press is unwearied in the publication of Church Histories, falsely so called; and the biography of learned and pious men is now frequently used as a means only of conveying and recommending the doctrinal opinions of their respective annalists (4). But the injury thus done to the cause of religion is irreparable. For those who, without investigation, take their opinions from such sources are rendered at once violent and blinded

partizans,—whilst the worst effects are produced on men of candid and investigating spirits, who may be (humanly speaking) prepared, not only to receive the truth, but to hold it fast. For, detecting narrow views and prejudices perverting the truth of history in books of accredited authority, they are led to suspect our whole system of priestcraft, and become sceptics even with regard to the main truths of Christianity.

I shall now take notice of an accusation only applicable to the Christian Knowledge Society, inasmuch as its principles are identified with those of our Church. It is stated by Mr. B., that the doctrine of Salvation by grace is extensively lost among us. Now, I am sure that the ministers of our Church were never more unanimous in the conviction that salvation is the free gift of God, and that our works are totally without merit. Will not Mr. Bickersteth be satisfied with this, or must he prescribe the terms in which every minister of the Gospel is to preach these doctrines? The author must know that on the precise interpretation of the words "Salvation by Grace" hangs all the Election and Predestination controversy. Does he wish that the Church of England should express herself explicitly on these subjects?—May she never adopt the suicidal measure!—If Bishop Sumner's Apostolical Preaching, and Archbishop Whately's Essay on Predestination and Election, will not bring us together on these points, surely the discussion of them is better suited to the tracts of those societies, whose object it is to create disunion in the Church of England, than to those of the Christian Knowledge Society,—a Society which is bound, as far as in her lieth, not only to lead all

such as profess and call themselves Christians into the way of truth, but to teach them to hold the faith in the unity of the Spirit, and in the bond of peace.

The next cause that he assigns for the increase of Popery is our departure from the Bible as the only standard of divine truth. Now, the Church of England exists on the principle of making this Book the only standard by which all its doctrines are to be tried, and her sons have never adopted any other.

It is easy to make such a charge, with the air of a man who is contending on a subject dear to him, and indifferent to his brethren of the clergy, and thus to obtain for himself the reputation of a Gospel champion. I absolve Mr. Bickersteth, indeed, from any such intention, as I believe that to ascribe exclusively the character of being faithful servants of their Lord to men whose opinions are exactly similar to our own, is a self-flattering delusion, to which the human heart is easily accustomed. It is, in fact, adopting on narrowed grounds the uncharitable pretensions of the Roman Catholic persuasion.

I must, however, express my belief, that there are hundreds associated with Mr. Bickersteth in the Gospel ministry, who are as ready to lay down their lives for this principle as he can be, or as any of the Reformers ever were. Humble servants of Christ, who would take shame to themselves for any distinction they might acquire by depreciating their fellow-labourers in Christ's vineyard, and who, from this feeling, would have refrained from such a calumny, had it not been on higher and holier grounds inconsistent with their profession. Nay, it is my firm conviction that if an army of holy martyrs to this principle were now to be called together, the

ministers of the Church of England were never more prepared to take their appointed stations in its ranks.

But Mr. Bickersteth must support his charge by some proof, and he obtains a notable one in the unguarded expression of "a Leader in a Protestant Church,"—I suppose he means a Bishop in his own,—which he republishes to the world, viz. "That the Bible should not be circulated without the Prayer Book as a *safeguard*."

This is, no doubt, an inconsiderate expression, on the one hand, but surely there is a glaring absurdity on the other, when the ministers of our Church are exhorted to reject the Prayer Book, or to teach others to reject it, as a Scripture help. Nor is the absurdity less, though the advice may be conveyed in enticing terms; such as (5) the *unfettered study of the Scriptures*; or, the not seeing *divine truth through any human medium*. For, in reality, such advice is suggesting an impossibility to any member of our Church. How can it be followed by any one who has learnt the Apostles' Creed, or heard of the doctrine of the Trinity? Must he not involuntarily compare what he reads with those doctrines which he has been previously taught? This is what our Church advises,—this is the examination she challenges, in opposition to the pretensions to infallibility advanced by the Church of Rome. Conscious that her creed is scriptural, she bids her members prove it by Scripture; but she never advises them to reject the Prayer Book as a Scripture help. She never advises them to form a system of doctrine for themselves, unfettered by her advice and control. For she does not inculcate the belief that the Spirit of God deserted her after the death of St. Peter, St. Paul, St. James, and

St. John, or their immediate successors, and she traces her creed, and some of her prayers, nearly to their times. Were she, then, to recommend to any one to study the Scripture only, in order to arrive at the truth under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, she would in reality recommend a rejection of what the Holy Spirit taught the Church in its purest ages, with the presumptuous hope of more correct teaching in the case of an individual. As I cannot, then, agree with the man who recommends giving the Bible with the Prayer Book as a safeguard against it, on the one hand; so, on the other, I cannot applaud his wisdom, who does not give the Prayer Book with the Bible, as a Scripture help, when he has the power of so doing¹ (6).

He next comments on the "writings of a highly respectable, learned, and devout class of men, which has risen up in one of our Universities;" the tendency of which is, he tells us, a departure from Protestantism, and an approach to Papal doctrine. Now I think Mr. Bickersteth might have derived the greatest instruction from these men if he had read their works with a desire to profit by them. If they overvalue the Christian ministry, as he says they do,

¹ Here "Reformation Principles" may mean the principles of those who compiled our Book of Common Prayer, or the principles of those who hated it, and when they had the power at once dispensed with its services. So that we may now describe those members of our Church as following Reformation Principles, who send forth the Bible with the Book of Prayer as its companion; and the same words may be spoken also of those who use the Christian Knowledge Society as a means only of procuring cheap Bibles, and say of the Prayer Book that they need it not.

he might have learnt to trace its doctrines and authority to a period somewhat earlier than the Reformation. If they overvalue the Sacraments in their system of divinity, he might have learnt not to omit them altogether in his.. I fear, however, that he has read rather with a desire to find out their faults, and exaggerate them, than to detect his own errors and amend them. With regard to his accusation of their opening another door to the land of darkness and the shadow of death, where the man of sin reigns, the pious men against whom it is directed, although they must plead guilty to much learning and study of the Fathers, are too well read in the modern periods of Church history not to be aware that this is a charge which has been brought against every firm and polished pillar of our temple, from the time of Cranmer to the present hour. They will know how to bear it patiently, and appreciate it at its full value.

The next publications on which the charge of promoting Popery falls, are the public journals ; rather a vague charge is made against them in another part of this work, when it is said that the chief body of reporters for the public journals are Papists. The " Record" only, and the " Christian Observer" are evidently excepted, for their pages are quoted without any such comment. I know nothing of the reporters for the public journals, nor should I feel myself authorized to give circulation to the report of their being Papists on hearsay evidence ; but if there be a well-grounded suspicion of this kind, I cannot see why the reporters for the " Record" should be excepted. If vulgar abuse of the highest and holiest

characters in our Church be proofs of Roman Catholic connection, the "Record" must be immediately found guilty. I read that paper until the low malevolence with which it continued to persecute the memory of Bishop Heber, convinced me that with the profession of being an extremely religious publication, it was not fit for a Christian's perusal. Being informed that its tone was become more moderate, I took it up last autumn, and found that it adopted towards a learned and pious Bishop of the Irish Church, a similar method of attack to that which Mr. Bickersteth advises in the case of the Papists, namely, that of attaching to him the odious appellation of the carnal mind at enmity with God, which neither sees nor can see the things of God, for they are spiritually discerned—a charge which, if believed, must at once destroy his usefulness as a Bishop, and his character as a Christian. I am told, however, that there is a class of strictly religious people in our Church who, on conscientious principles, abstain from every species of worldly amusements, and from the society of those who do not think with them, yet scruple not to place on their own tables this weekly temptation to evil-speaking and evil-thinking (6).

The "Christian Observer" takes higher ground, indeed it is conducted with ability; nor do I mean to accuse it of aiding the progress of Popery, save as in common with all other party publications, it widens the differences of opinion which exist between good men in our Church. The editor knows, for instance, that there is a difference between the doctrine of the excellent Archbishop Leighton, and the no less pious Bishop Wilson, whose works we

have been considering as connected with the Christian Knowledge Society. He knows also that there is a distinction between the opinions of the late Bishop Heber and the present most estimable prelate of Calcutta. He takes to himself credit for knowing the points of doctrine on which they disagree; and, as if the main truths of Christianity were at stake in the controversy, he scarcely omits in any page of his Periodical to show you which he thinks is right, sometimes by intemperate discussions of the points at issue, at others by the abundant use of party terms, and conventual expressions. The readers of this publication, who take their religious creed from it, (and there are many such; though none would exclaim more loudly against seeing the truth through any human medium,) become casuists at once, and making some one holy character in our Church their idol, learn immediately to think lightly of, and perhaps to revile another, not considering that a child, or even an idiot, can perceive the differences which may exist in two holy edifices raised to God's service; but that to appreciate the design and proportions of either, demands the judgment of a man of science—to value rightly the holy uses to which either is sanctified, requires the enlightened understanding of a man of God.

Mr. B. seems to think it a serious charge which is made by Dissenters against our Church, that it stands in the way of the progress of Reformation principles; blessed be our God it does at present stand in the way of false principles, precisely in the same manner as a well-constituted system of civil polity stands in the way of the progress of society

from an absolute despotism to anarchy and confusion. But look at the countries where no such bulwark has stayed the course of Reformation principles, falsely so called;—look at Geneva, which, from a school of polemical divinity, has become the fountain from which a polluted stream of infidel publications has spread over Europe, until the Trinity, the atonement, the incarnation of the Son of God, have been prohibited by authority, as subjects of public instruction. Surely it might have been better in this instance if some sober form of Church government had “stood in the way”—if some Christian Knowledge Society had propagated the main doctrines of Christianity, however cold and formal it might have appeared to some ardent spirits, in the steady performance of its holy duty; for by such means, humanly speaking, the consummation of Reformation principles in the case of Geneva might have been averted. Look, too, at America, and will any Christian say, that in the state of religion which obtains there, he sees the slightest approximation to the fulfilment of his Saviour’s prayer, that his Church should be one, even as He and the Father are *one*? To what does Mr. Bickersteth’s advice tend, but to precisely the same state of religion in England? Her Church, it is true, alone stands in the way of such Reformation principles. But I think these instances are sufficient warning to any zealous disciple of his Lord, that by strengthening her hands to the utmost of his power, he will best promote his Master’s honour.

Mr. Bickersteth’s view of the case is very different indeed. The plan which he advises, is to send the Gospel through the world, by means of societies,

which have nothing to do with the politics of this world ; which means, in the phraseology of the day, that they are unauthorised by the Church of England, and unconnected with its interests. Now being a minister of that Church, and bound, as I consider myself, to act as a member of that body in the cause of Christ, I cannot think that the Almighty would regard me with a favourable eye, were I to follow such advice. I cannot believe that the Father, who maketh those he loves to be of one mind in an house, can approve of divided councils among the members of his Church. I cannot believe that God the Son, who thrice prayed his Father for its unity, can look with a benignant eye on its divisions. Nor can I think that the Holy Spirit, who denounced all party distinctions as fruits of the carnal mind, can lead his aid to those who violate the unity of the Church, in order, as they say, to further his cause, who loved it, and gave Himself for it.

I think it also very questionable that the power of Romanism will ever be diminished by such means. It seems hitherto to have increased in a mysterious manner in exact proportion as such unauthorised measures have been used to check it ; and I believe that the only Church that will be rendered powerless by such a warfare will be our own.

The schism inflicted on us by the Bible Society has greatly lessened the influence of the Church of England. But this Society, while it adheres to the principles it has hitherto professed, appears to me to confer a manifest benefit on the Roman Catholic. The main doctrine it has promulgated is this, that

the Bible is sufficient to teach men Christianity. Now it is easy for the Roman Catholic to prove that such is not the province of the Bible, but that it has been the office of the Church from the earliest ages : thus he is enabled to throw a veil over the deceitfulness of his own creed, and the dread he has of submitting to the ordeal of Scripture truth, by convicting his opponents of a decided error, and vanquishing them in a position which they had no right to occupy. As for the effect of any popular cry against Popery which may be raised by the advocates of the Bible Society on mistaken principles : with such things we can have nothing to do, whose profession permits us to rejoice only in the truth. Besides I should always beware of confounding Protestantism with Christianity : I must always bear in mind that there are Protestants who hold a more corrupted system of doctrine than the Roman Catholic. Though I do not agree with Mr. Bickersteth in preferring the superstitious rites of the Roman Catholic Church to the Scriptural services of our own, when they are performed by an unworthy instrument ;—and among the 18,000 ministers of the Church of England how few comparatively are unworthy ? And though I could not give publicity to the assertion that any one had attended the holy services of our Church, without hearing the name of the Redeemer, *as I should know such an assertion to be untrue*, yet I should always remember that there are among Protestants those from whose worship God incarnate is excluded, and that the Papist would be greatly injured by being converted to their creed. It has been well remarked, by an able divine of the present day, that

the phrase Protestant religion, is indefinite. "The very expression," says he, "whenever it is not evidently synonymous with the religion of the Protestant Church in England, implies inattention to the fact that there is no one religion common to Protestants as contradistinguished from Romanists, and tends to throw a veil over another important fact, that the creeds of certain Protestant sects are far more remote than that of the Church of Rome from the truth of the Gospel." We are also warned by him most wisely, not "to sacrifice the advantage ground, which we, as members of the Church of England, should never forego in our charitable efforts to reclaim our Romanist brethren. The Romanist should never be called on to come out of Rome, as if it mattered not into what Church he entered, or whether into none at all, as if we did not acknowledge, equally with himself, the important tenet that Christ did not merely teach a religion, or a system of rules and principles, or dictate a book to guide his disciples; but instituted a society, a society animated like one body by one spirit, of which every individual disciple of Christ must form a component part. Nay, in this country of England the Romanist should be taught, that he is in truth but a Dissenter from the one Established Church of Christ in this nation, to which his fathers once belonged, although in error, and to which we still belong, having removed those errors."

After this mild and truly apostolic style of expostulation, Mr. Bickersteth's system of calling names, and denouncing anathemas, comes so harshly on the ear, that we are led to consider whether these terms

are applicable to the Church of Rome, and whether we are justified in applying them. With regard to their being applicable to the Church of Rome, my own conviction is far short of certainty. With regard to our being justified in applying them as terms of reproach, I am convinced that we are not. It is not surprising that in the times of the Reformers bitter words were used, when men contended with each other even unto death. And we shall do well in candour to remember, that each party took the sword in turn, and both needed much the admonition of our Lord,—“Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.” But it is a different thing for us to use terms of contumely when the tempest of human passions is comparatively at rest; nor can we defend the use of such terms, because we find them in Scripture. We know, for instance, that he who hateth his brother is a murderer, and that all uncharitable persons are included scripturally under that term. Are we, then, to call all uncharitable persons murderers? Are we to reiterate this appellation continually? Are we not rather to convince them of the uncharitable deeds they have uncharitably committed in the spirit of men who know that they also are compassed with infirmity, and to exhort them, for Jesus Christ’s sake, to be reconciled unto God? But Mr. Bickersteth does not only use these denunciations against the Romanists; he carries them much further,—he carries them even to the throne of grace. I find, in a prayer which he says is for Papists, this expression: “Open their eyes to see the speedy destruction coming upon all who belong to Babylon, who shall be tormented

with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." (7) Now if the expression "all that belong to Babylon" means all Papists—and this is its apparent meaning, and will be received as such—I must say, that the Romanist errors (utterly as I detest and abjure them), if held in charity (as I have no doubt many of that communion do hold them), are not, as it appears to me, more repugnant to the spirit of Christianity than the temper of mind which could induce a man deliberately in his closet, before his God, to compose such a prayer as this to the Father of all mercies.

I have now done with this volume. I took it up with the hope of gaining information on a very interesting subject, but have been disappointed. With regard to the causes of the progress of Popery, the author appears to me to be mistaken; as also with regard to the methods by which that progress may be arrested. He traces the increase of Popery to the falling off from Reformation principles—I to the falling off from the principle of unity in our Church. He would oppose this progress by means of Reformation societies, founded on the principle of Independency, the most hostile of any to our Church. I would merge all minor differences of opinion among Churchmen; and, under the direction of constituted authorities, strengthen the firmest bulwark of Protestantism that exists in this country, or in the world. Were I a Roman Catholic indeed I should regard Mr. Bickersteth's plans with the utmost complacency. For I should first know that the more violent he was, the more he must alienate the minds of

Christian men from his cause, and give my religion the greatest aid in his power, by showing that the spirit of persecution (as evinced by opprobrious appellations at least) existed in other than Roman Catholic bosoms. I should also perceive that the Independent principles he advocates were powerful to remove the only obstacle now existing to the consummation of all my wishes; viz. that the Roman Catholic should be the only established Apostolical Church in Western Europe.

I am glad to acknowledge that Mr. Bickersteth does not fall into the error of supposing that the success of a Church will always be commensurate with the purity of its doctrines and the earnestness of its ministers. It is a common device of those who are given to change, to maintain this position; and we hear many excellent and well meaning men declare, that if our Church has but these requisites, she is certain to prosper in the land. This is altogether an unscriptural—a delusive and false position. It is unscriptural, for truth and holiness have never obtained a *certain* reward on earth, save during the short period of the Jewish Theocracy. The Head of our Church was rejected of men; and has told us that it is enough for the disciple to be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord. It is delusive, because on such grounds we must allow the Roman Catholic to be at this moment the purest faith, and the most devoted ministry in the world. It is false also in principle, for it sets up another standard than the Word of God, by which to try our doctrines and conduct,—namely, their apparent success. The

worst effects result from this opinion ; for unstable ministers of our Church are led to adopt Independent principles and practices, and to justify themselves by a short-lived popularity, which they term the success of their ministrations. Hence imminent and immediate danger does not unite us together firmly, but suggests the idea that there must be something wrong in our doctrine or discipline,—and hence, in our utmost need we have a multitude of counsellors, but little hearty co-operation. There are, however, still many faithful ministers of our Church who cannot be induced to think that being “valiant for the truth,” means to follow popular opinion ; and, at its bidding, to betray the cause they are enlisted to support. There are many who will never be deceived by those who declare it to be their duty to maintain this or that doctrine, however it may be spoken against, when they really mean that they will maintain this or that popular novelty, however they may violate the unity of the faith by such a profession. They well know, that as there is but one God and Father of all, so there is only one faith and one baptism. This faith they believe their Church to hold,—that baptism they deem her empowered to administer ; they wish, therefore, to be known only as sober and vigilant ministers of her holy communion : their first hope on earth is, that she may prosper ; and as they know that unity of purpose is one means of her defence which God approves, they grieve to see that it prevails only in the camp of her enemies. They also know, as a solemn truth which it behoves them to keep and to maintain, however great may be

the obloquy which such a conviction may excite, or however bitter the sense of insufficiency and unworthiness with which it may fill their own bosoms, that they are the lineal and duly appointed successors of those Apostles who were the salt of the earth—the light of the world—the city set upon an hill. Held up, as it were, to the scrutinizing, and too often unfriendly gaze of men, they yet derive comfort from recognising, in this very circumstance, the character which their Saviour prophetically assigned to them.

In the pure faith of that Church, at whose altars they serve in the ordinances of divine and apostolical appointment; in her services, breathing in every sentence the truth, the correction, the comfort of the Gospel, they see and adore the impress of the holy quickening Spirit of God(9). In her temporal endowments,—in the protection afforded her by the state,—they acknowledge his outstretched arm defending his chosen instruments, and in a sense making this kingdom the kingdom of his Christ. Even in the corruptions and heresies which surround her—the dissensions, the divisions, the falling away—they see a confirmation of the Divine Word, for they are foretold,—the Spirit expressly speaks that so it should be,—if it were otherwise, the Scriptures would not be true.

Therefore, with holy confidence they mark well her bulwarks, and note the beauty and strength of her towers and palaces; and their hearts swell with gratitude, and their tongues pour forth praises to the Almighty goodness which has placed them within her precincts. Glorious things have been spoken of this city of God, and not less true than glorious;

but now, beleaguered with foes, and threatened by the evil spirits of covetousness, of infidelity, and of schism, she claims at our hands, as her appointed sentinels and watchmen, all the succour and defence which the highest wisdom, the greatest sacrifices, the most patient fortitude and self-denial can furnish. She claims these services from all : she will obtain them now from those only who have learned when they do well, and suffer for it, to take it patiently : she will obtain it from those only who, when their cause prospers, give to God the glory, but are contented to know that the reward of patient continuance in well doing is not here.

Not that we are to look with a careless eye on external dangers or adversaries : we are to inform, to remonstrate—never to consent to injustice—nor to let our silence or forbearance be misconstrued into any such consent—to resist meekly, and to suffer cheerfully ; and yet these are easy duties compared with the daily and hourly warfare against internal foes, of qualities apparently the most opposite, and contending for the dominion of our hearts, with the Holy Spirit and with each other. Spiritual pride, worldly pride, uncharitableness under the cloke of religion, indifference under the cloke of charity—party spirit, sloth, pleasure, worldly-mindedness,—these subtle enemies are about our path, and about our bed, and in our bosoms ; ever watchfully adapting their temptation to the infinite variety of our dispositions, and to the weakness which most easily besets us. These, if not successfully resisted—if not utterly beaten down and rooted out—will destroy the watchman and betray the city ; and it is impossible

to estimate this danger too highly. He who has watched their operation on his own heart the most faithfully, will have the clearest perception of the Gospel truth; that as with private Christians, so more especially with Christian ministers, the path of safety is narrow. If we take a step aside to the right hand or to the left, the act is sinful, and its consequences may be fatal.

Indeed, the part of a Christian minister becomes more important in proportion as the religious and moral state of society around him declines, for the most signal instances of divine vengeance have been exhibited, and the most fearful amount of human misery has been realised, in those nations where the progress of political excitement has been unchecked by the influence of the Christian faith.

This is indeed a very superficial and imperfect sketch of the duties, the performance of which now devolves on us as the ministers of our holy Church. But however imperfect it may be, I believe it to be right in principle, and as the course prescribed is more difficult and self-denying than the assertion of our own superior faithfulness or judgment in points of doctrine, so I believe also that it will be more acceptable in the sight of God.

With regard to the danger that threatens the Church of England, I have seen it long and in the strongest point of view; I cannot, however, ascribe her weakness to a falling off from the doctrines of the Reformation, but to a sour dissentient principle within her, which, as a canker worm, preys on her strength, and paralyses her efforts; which too, in common with that noxious insect, gives to those

parts which it most deeply corrodes an unnatural and offensive prominence.

But I write not against such excrescences ; thus much we must know of them ; that if the parent trunk be restored to its primitive vigour they will vanish ; if it falls, they will have done their work, and will be immediately cast aside as useless. I would direct my feeble efforts solely against the principle of disunion. I would beseech all the sincere members of our Church to give her hearty and undivided support in this the hour of her danger ; not merely as to a religious establishment defensible on Utilitarian principles, thus virtually conceding to the enemy her sacred and impregnable position, but *avowedly for this reason, that she is their pure and apostolical parent* (10) ; acknowledging her wisdom in requiring assent to articles of faith “in general, as much as may be, because it is the way of unity.” Acting themselves on this principle, and giving the gainsayer no longer any reason for his taunt, that the nearer we approach together the more irreconcilable are our dissensions.

NOTES.

Note 1, page 15.

St. Ignatius, the disciple of St. John, declares that without a Bishop, Presbyters, (whence our term Priest,) and Deacons, there is no Church. If we allow these requisites, the authority of the Church of England is manifest. It has been, however, the unwearied attempt of what is called the religious world, in these latter days, to depreciate our high privileges of Church membership. Instead of inculcating the humbling idea of our being unworthy members of an holy Church, instead of suggesting the self-abasing consideration of how imperfectly we have performed the promises we made at our admittance to its communion, we are taught by a self-flattering delusion to consider her services too little spiritualised for our advanced state in godliness; her communion too indiscriminating for the Elect of God to rejoice in it. Hence select Societies have been formed, under distinctive appellations, both within our Church and without its precincts, as comprehending wheat of too fine a quality to remain among the tares until the harvest: as composed of Christians too pure in their renewed nature to remain in the same net with the unconverted, until their final separation by the angels of God. In vain has Scripture

denounced all such schemes as fruits of the carnal mind,—in vain has history taught us that the heresies by which the Church of Christ has been corrupted, have generally owed their rise to such beginnings.

Still, however, whilst any society is deemed necessary to the constitution of a Church of Christ, the priority of the claim of the Church of England to that appellation must be extensively acknowledged. An erroneous opinion is now therefore sedulously inculcated, that there is no need of any society to constitute a Church—that individuals are the Church themselves, the city placed on an hill instead of being only citizens thereof. And this opinion has been unguardedly sanctioned by some of our popular preachers in their published discourses. This opinion has suggested to me the exact similarity of the extravagancies into which men are led by ultra independent notions in religion and in politics. In the heat of the French Revolution, when party spirit ran highest, a member of the national assembly ascended the tribune, and declared himself to be in a state of revolution. Tired of being a member of any one of the various parties which disturbed the state, he announced himself as an individual to be in a state of mutiny.

Note 2, page 20.

Our Baptismal Service (may it be preserved to us and to our children for ever) presents an obstacle to religious extravagance totally impassable by any sincere and consistent member of our Church. John Wesley, when he began to hold opinions which *led of necessity to separation from the Church of England*, and not until then, virtually denied the obligation of

his Baptismal Covenant. This consequence of his doctrines was placed before him most forcibly by his brother. Mr. Bickersteth removes this obstruction from his path at once, by denying the Baptismal Covenant altogether. But he might, with equal reason, as I have shown, deny his Christian name, if it displeased him, and declare that it was not given him by his god-fathers and god-mothers in his Baptism. The truth in this instance cannot be stated too plainly, for some members of our Communion are fast approaching that stage of inconsistency when they will openly deny all the characteristic doctrines of our Church, and yet remain within its pale, and administer its Sacraments according to their present forms.

Note 3, page 23.

Mr. Bickersteth warns us against attaching too great weight to names, while he himself quotes Mr. Cecil's name as of almost oracular authority,—a man whose talents and piety I agree with him in valuing most highly, but whom his friends have deeply injured by acting on some of his most questionable opinions, and by treating as axioms some of his strongest and most unguarded statements.

Note 4, page 29.

Mr. Scott advised the publication of the works of the Reformers, in order that it might be shown that his own opinions coincided with theirs. This advice has been followed with all the zeal of party spirit. I think, however, that the learned and pious man would have refrained from giving it, had he foreseen that it would lead to the perversion of historical truth.

Note 5, page 32.

In terms like these it has lately been the habit of some ministers of our Church to exhort their fellow-labourers to an independent study of the Scriptures; that is, to take the Bible in their hands, and settle from it their system of divinity. Advice, self-pleasing indeed, but not the less preposterous, as given to men who ought to offer up daily and hourly thanksgivings to the throne of grace, that they have a creed, a liturgy, and articles of faith, in which the doctrines contained in the Bible are Scripturally set forth, to which they have set their hands, and to which they should have given their hearts. This abuse of the sacred right of private judgment I have grieved to see advanced in almost all the popular publications of a modern date, and among others in Mr. Bridges' *Christian Ministry*, a book which bears every evidence of being written by a pious and good man, and which wants nothing but an absence of party spirit to render it eminently useful. Would that such men cultivated that candour, the excess of which they impute to Bishop Burnet as a fault; that they read the preface to his work on the Articles of our Church, and wrote and acted on the principles of moderation therein recommended! They might, in that case, build up the breaches of our Church, instead of widening them. They might heal the wounds thereof when it shaketh, pouring in oil and wine, instead of giving her vinegar to drink in the hour of her visitation.

Note 6, page 33.

In a widely circulated, and so called religious periodical, among others, the three following reforms are stated as being essential to the stability of our

Church. That our Catechism should be discarded as being anti-calvinistic, and the catechisms of the Assembly substituted for it. That the whole of our baptismal service should be left out, with the exception of the sprinkling with water, and the words of our Saviour which follow. That all those parts of our Holy Communion service should be omitted, which can be construed to imply any other view of that sacred ordinance but this; viz. that it is simply commemorative. This scheme may at present be deemed visionary. It is as well, however, that the vigilant members of our Church should know the point of their defences which will be first assailed by the enemy; and they will not err in expecting the Prayer Book to be that point. A great portion of the so called Religious Press is now employed assiduously in undermining or assaulting this our breastwork.

While the Prayer Book holds its place in the churches of our land, let our foes diminish our revenues, let them spoil our palaces, they will never erase the traces of our apostolical descent, or entirely destroy the prescriptive influence of the Church of England. The people will continue to look to her, in the intervals of excitement, as their spiritual parent, from whom they first learnt the pure accents of devotion,—the proper and fitting language with which to approach the throne of grace. This our enemies well know. They are also fully acquainted with the difficulty of substituting any other form of devotion as a rival to our book of prayer. They give up this attempt as hopeless. The people of England, at the Restoration, heard again the services of the Prayer Book with undissembled joy; and no wonder,

when we consider how their spiritual wants had been supplied in its absence. I have no fear, then, that the hearts of the people will ever be estranged from the Prayer Book *as it now is*. Nor have I any dread of immediate violence: to such a course, at present, “*sensus moresque repugnant*.” My solicitude is excited, lest it may be mutilated and disfigured,—dishonoured first, and then thrown aside.

Note 7, page 35.

The altered tone of the Christian Observer towards its former favourite, the present Bishop of Calcutta, since he found himself called on to vindicate the authority of a Christian Bishop, inclines me to doubt, whether any man in high station, who is known to hold in honour the characteristic tenets of the Church, will ever obtain the suffrage of such a publication.

Note 8, page 41.

The last sentence of this prayer seems to imply the author's belief in the Millenarian doctrine, which has lately been extensively revived among the ministers of our Church. This, perhaps, is a point on which good men may agree to differ, but having given some time and study to the question, I shall shortly state three plain reasons which harmonize with each other, and, among many others, have led me to reject this doctrine as unscriptural. The Millenarian opinion generally received I believe to be this, that before the general destruction of the world, and of all things in it, by fire, our Saviour will come on the earth, and reign personally 1000 years. This idea (in common with all others which assign a temporal reign to our Saviour, or a personal reign in any other place than in the eternal kingdom of his

Father,) appears to me to be, in the first place, opposed to the general teaching of Christ and his apostles, who exhorted their disciples to raise their thoughts from things on earth to things in heaven, where their Redeemer, having gone before, will, in his Father's house, prepare a place for those that love Him; and that He will return, and take them to Him; that where He is, there they may be also.

Secondly, such an opinion appears to me to be directly opposed to St. Peter's account of the second coming of the Son of God. He advises us to look, and wait for the day of the Son of God, *in the which* the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. The assertion that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, evidently applies to the period before his coming, as an answer to those who argued against its ever taking place, from its delay; but the day of his coming is to be sudden, and at his coming, on that very day, the destruction is to take place of the globe we now inhabit.

This appears to me to be plainly set down; and if St. Peter had foreseen the imaginations which were about to prevail in these latter days, I do not think that he could have contradicted them in stronger language than in that sentence which he twice repeats, "The day of the Lord, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

But the strongest passage of Scripture against the Millenarian hypothesis appears to me to be in the 4th chapter of St. Paul's 1st epistle to the Thessa-

lonians. The disciples of our Lord, who saw Him ascend into heaven, evidently believed that during their lifetime they should see Him coming again in like manner as they had seen Him ascending into heaven. And when they saw many witnesses of His ascension consigned to the grave before He returned, they were dispirited lest they also might die before the return of their Redeemer. How does St. Paul console them? He gives them a plain account of what is to take place at the second coming of Christ. He tells them that those who are alive on the earth shall not prevent, that is, shall not have any advantage over those that sleep—shall not reach the presence of their Saviour before them. But that before any meet their Lord, the dead in Christ shall rise, aroused by the voice of the Archangel, and by the trump of God; and then, that is immediately after that event has happened, continues the Apostle, “we which are alive shall be caught up together with them in the air, and *so shall we ever be with the Lord.*” (Where but in his Father’s house? in fulfilment of his own promise: “I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that *where I am* ye may be also.”) “Comfort ye one another,” says the Apostle, “with these words;” that is, with this account of our Lord’s coming. Now this appears to me to be a plain, simple account of what is then to take place. To shake my faith in it, it is not sufficient to bring texts of Scripture, of dubious interpretation, and to apply them to the establishment of a different view of the subject. I never can admit for a moment the force of that which is doubtful, when it is placed in opposition to that which is clearly revealed, for by once acknowledging this principle we must shake

the firmest doctrines of our faith. But some unstable ministers of the Gospel have gone so far as to preach the Millenarian doctrine, as if it was *undoubtedly true*; and have, by so doing, in many instances, prepared the minds of their hearers to receive the Irvingite delusions.

Note 9, page 45.

It is the proud and self-pleasing practice of many who call themselves of our Communion to use the Church in settling their creed, just as infidels use the Gospel in directing their practice, to derive from it all the indirect benefit they may when it opposes not any engrossing passion of their own, taking due care never to own its guidance, or to express towards it the slightest feeling of deference, or of humble gratitude. No sooner did this spirit make its appearance within our Church than it was hailed by independent religionists of all descriptions. Indeed for some years it has needed little more to give a minister of the Church of England reputation in the world, than that he should be known to hold unfettered opinions, meaning, such as are not in strict accordance with the obvious spirit of his Church services. Thus congregations have been composed in part of attached members of our Church, who were prevented by their principles from deserting her, and in part of Dissenters who attended the preaching of the minister whom they supposed to hold the same opinions with themselves. The worthlessness of such a compromise is now becoming daily more apparent. Indeed, as it is a mistake in principle to expect that the cause of truth can be promoted by such means, so it implies an obvious disre-

gard of history, and of experience, to suppose that any establishment can derive permanent strength from such conduct in its members. Our legitimate means of conciliating souls, and winning them to our Communion, are of a very different description. Unyielding firmness in maintaining the pure profession of our faith, moderation, charity unwearied in providing for the spiritual and temporal wants of our brethren, joined with an undissembled purity of life and conversation;—these things (though they will never command popular applause) may, by God's grace, bring back many of those to our fold who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and bind them to us in an union indissoluble alike during time and in eternity.

Note 10, page 48.

If the Church of England be allowed to stand on the same footing with regard to the Apostle's exhortations to unity as the Church of Corinth, there is not a shadow of excuse for any persons to form parties within her precincts.

St. Paul puts an end to all pretensions on which such a course can be defended, by blaming any one for saying, as a mark of distinction, "I am of Christ." Such an injunction as this speaks plainly and strikes so directly at spiritual pride and self-esteem, that various have been the means invented to get rid of it; amongst other arguments invented for this purpose, it has been asserted that the Church of Corinth was a pure Church in comparison with our own, and that on this account there was no need for holy men to form separate societies within it. Mr. Scott, in order to establish this view of the subject, declares "that wicked Christians and irreligious believers are

never mentioned in the sacred volume." These words are true indeed, in a general sense as applicable to our times as well as to that of the Apostles, (for in the sight of God there is no such character as a wicked Christian or irreligious believer,) but when used to establish a distinction between the terms that obtained in the times of the Apostles and in our own, they are false.

No doubt in the infancy of a Church, and in a time of persecution, fewer nominal Christians existed within it; but so far from fewer vices or less notorious ones existing in the Church of Corinth *comparatively* than in the Church of England, we have reason to think that there were more. Nominal converts brought into the Church of Corinth many of their idolatrous habits, as is plain by their keeping the Sacrament rather as an heathen feast than as a partaking of the body and blood of a sin-hating God. In the fifth chapter too of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, (as if it had been written to meet such arguments,) vices are recorded as existing in the Church of Corinth, which would not be tolerated in the present day. Such has been the general but unacknowledged influence of Christian principles.

The exhortations, then, to unity, apply equally to us: the wisdom of adhering to this advice, as the best means of promoting the glory of God, no one can doubt who has studied the history of Christ's Church on earth with a candid mind. We need not refer to a remote period in her annals, in order to be convinced of this.

In the reign of George the Third (when Mr. Bickersteth says there would not have been a spirit of religion diffused through the land to meet the

enemy,—a self-pleasing but false statement, which the page of history contradicts) what was the effect of union in our Church? It withstood the most violent and dangerous attack which the infidel power ever made on the Church of Christ,—an attack led on by men proud in their vaunts of philosophy, “falsely so called,” and followed up by an innumerable crowd, demanding that the spouse of Christ, whom he loved, and for whom He gave Himself, should be immolated, with the same spirit as that in which the people of the Jews demanded his own crucifixion, but outnumbering them by myriads.

How did this attack succeed with us?—it was not only beaten back, it was put to shame. The imputation of infidelity became a scandal to the man who suffered under it,—a mark in the forehead of him who owned it. But is it so now? Is it so when so much more is said and done avowedly in the cause of Christ, but in direct opposition, both to his prayer and to the commands of his Apostle? Does not Infidelity raise her head? does she not walk without a thought of shame amidst the high places of our land?

Let others harp on the imperfections which in those days existed in our Establishment: let others compare her state now with what it was then, with a smile of self-congratulation: I will endeavour, by God’s grace, to discern her failings with as quick an eye—not contemptuously to expose, but diligently to amend them. Of her I will say, that she *then* fought nobly the battle of the Lord, and that he blessed her, yea, he gave her the victory.

• THE END.



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